

**DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION  
INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNING BOARD**

**Group of National Experts on the AHELO Feasibility Study**

**NATIONAL PROJECT MANAGER - ROLE DESCRIPTION**

**Paris, 15-16 March 2010**

*This document was prepared by the Consortium. Further details about the role of the National Project Manager and the Institutional Coordinator will be provided in support resources (survey operations procedures manuals).*

*The AHELO GNE is invited to*

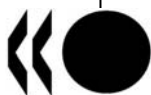
- *TAKE NOTE and AGREE on the role of NPMs and ICs*

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**National Project Manager  
Role Description**



Assessment of  
Higher Education  
Learning Outcomes

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## INTRODUCTION

1. This manual provides an overview of the AHELO Feasibility Study National Centre and National Project Manager (NPM). The manual provides broad guidelines that countries may use to ensure that appropriate resources are in place to participate fully in the project. Please contact the AHELO Consortium ([ahelo@acer.edu.au](mailto:ahelo@acer.edu.au)) if you have any queries or would like further information about National Centres or National Project Managers.

## AHELO NATIONAL CENTRE

### Overview

2. It is important that participating countries are able to provide appropriate infrastructure for managing key facets of the AHELO Feasibility Study. The in-country infrastructure plays a vital role in supporting the development and implementation of the study.

3. The National Centre is the organisational group that will manage the study in the country. Experience with related studies suggests that these may be headquartered in government offices, or contracted to specialist service agencies. The consideration here may be financial, or it may be related to perceptions of independence and ultimately to the purpose and positioning of the AHELO Feasibility Study. Given the autonomy of institutions and that AHELO may be viewed in some systems as a compliance mechanism or even funding indicator, the Consortium's preliminary advice is that the National Centre be established at 'arms length' from funding or regulatory agencies. Of course, discussions about AHELO have been underway since 2006, and many national centres have already been established.

4. Whichever model is chosen, it is vital that the National Centre has the means of communicating efficiently with the OECD, government agencies, the AHELO Consortium, and institutions. The groundbreaking nature of the AHELO Feasibility Study means that particular value would be derived from the National Centre having well-established and sophisticated strategies for communicating with key institutional, national and international stakeholders. This requires nuanced knowledge of the domestic system, effective leadership capacity, an (optimally) established rapport with opinion leaders, and sound technical footings.

### Resource requirements

5. The National Centre requires standard office infrastructure, funds to support in-country and international travel, funds to undertake consultations in-country, access to document preparation and review facilities, staff or networks to manage translation and adaptation processes, the facilities to manage relationships with Institutional Coordinators (ICs, defined below). While the staffing of the National Centre depends on its location and history, core staff would include:

- National Project Manager (NPM);
- Research Assistant;
- Administrative Assistant;
- Translation/Adaptation Advisor;
- Technical Advisor; and
- Editorial Support.

6. Indicative cost in Euro options for in-country participation are given in Table 1. This estimation will vary greatly from country to country, and is included as a rough guide only. It is difficult to be overly prescriptive about costs without detailed analysis of national contexts, but these lower- and upper-bound

estimates are provided to assist with national planning. These estimates are based on review of costs of leading in-country activities of a similar nature and scale to AHELO in Australasia, Asia, North America, and Europe.

**Table 1: Indicative National Centre costs (Euro)**

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>Total</b>
Country cost (lower estimate)	200,000	200,000	400,000
Country cost (upper estimate)	450,000	450,000	900,000

7. Table 2 presents an estimation of the time commitment needed for the implementation of the AHELO Feasibility Study in one country. It includes the employment of two senior staff on a 0.75 time fraction, as well as administrative and technical support, and translation support. As per costs, this estimation will vary from country to country. Two alternative costing have been provided in Table 2 to reflect this variation. The first costing and set of day allocations assumes a lower bound estimate that assumes that the National Centre can be established using existing infrastructure and expert personnel. The second costing and day allocations assume establishment of an independent support agency.

**Table 2: Consortium estimate of staff time for one country (days)**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Lower estimate</b>	<b>Upper estimate</b>
National Project Manager	100	400
Research Assistant	100	400
Administrative Assistant	80	150
Translation/Adaptation Advisor	0	30
Technical Advisor	10	30
Editorial Support	10	20

## **AHELO NATIONAL PROJECT MANAGER**

### **Overview**

8. The National Project Manager (NPM) is nominated by the participating country. The NPM will be responsible for the implementation of the AHELO feasibility study at national level. More specifically, the NPM has overall responsibility for ensuring that all required tasks are carried out on schedule and in accordance with the prescribed technical standards and survey operations guidelines, and for documenting processes implemented at national level.

### **Qualifications**

9. A person appointed to the NPM position should have experience in planning, organising and conducting large-scale surveys:

- Essential skills for the NPM position include the ability to identify, select and manage a team of project staff, together with the experience and competence to handle multiple tasks that may require attention simultaneously.
- Previous work in the fields of higher education, educational assessment and context surveys would be very beneficial for the NPM position, as would familiarity with data processing, survey quality control procedures and data file structures. Ideally, the NPM should have a PhD in psychometrics, statistics, social-science measurement or related discipline.
- The NPM must possess excellent oral and written communication skills in the local language, as well as in English. The NPM will need sufficient linguistic knowledge and confidence to represent the participating country at international meetings where all aspects of the project will be discussed in English, the official communication language of the AHELO Feasibility Study.

### **NPM roles**

10. NPMs will be the primary contact point for the AHELO Consortium in the day to day dealings with that country on all issues related to the implementation of the AHELO Feasibility Study in their country. It is expected that NPMs will be assessment/survey specialists. NPMs play a vital role in ensuring that the AHELO Feasibility Study is administered in accordance with prescribed technical standards and survey operations guidelines, and in documenting processes implemented at national level toward the development of the AHELO Feasibility Study's final reports.

11. More specifically, the NPMs will play at least two critical roles. The first is that they lead survey implementation in their respective countries. This is an enormously complex job, and one of the prime responsibilities of the AHELO Consortium is to provide accurate, detailed and timely information to NPMs that guide their work on key implementation tasks. The AHELO Consortium will use a variety of methods to communicate with NPMs and to deliver the support and information they require to perform their functions. These methods will include:

- maintaining regular and direct email communication with NPMs as a group and with individual NPMs;
- communicating with NPMs using the AHELO Exchange – a wiki set up to manage the flow of information and communication (see: <https://ahelo.acer.edu.au>);
- using telephone and video-based meetings where this is appropriate; and
- conducting briefing and training meetings at which key information is provided for discussion and review, and at which input from NPMs is obtained to assist the team in the conduct of its business.

12. The second major role for NPMs is in providing a channel through which national interests are represented in the implementation of the AHELO Feasibility Study. The use of surveys and review documents, providing an online discussion forum, and including in meetings sessions that are specifically designed to collect national input and the views of NPMs are examples of the ways in which these objectives will be achieved. The AHELO Consortium will place great emphasis on obtaining and using input and feedback from NPMs on such matters as the draft frameworks as they are developed, the proposed test and questionnaire items, operational issues with survey implementation, the conduct of meetings, workshops and training sessions, and NPMs are in a key position to provide the most informed advice on the survey data collected through the AHELO Feasibility Study assessment, and its interpretation.

13. Each NPM will be asked to co-ordinate the collection of relevant national examples of assessments in their country. It will also need to co-ordinate the review of assessment materials and contextual questionnaires. This will involve identification of appropriate national experts to contribute to the review process, collation of review response and communication of these to the AHELO Consortium.

14. NPMs will play a particularly important role in developing and validating the context instruments. Key facets of this include:

- supplying background materials to inform conceptual and practical designs;
- consulting with institutions to contextualise and validate proposed indicators;
- supplying and reviewing items and instruments;
- assisting with qualitative and quantitative validation activities;
- reviewing final instrumentation prior to deployment;
- assisting with the collection and verification of existing system data;
- contributing to data entry, verification and coding; and
- reviewing results and reports.

### **Meetings**

15. It is suggested that each country should organise a national committee to offer advice to the project and ensure that national views are represented. This may be composed of national experts in, for

example, survey research, education management, relevant government agencies, teachers' associations and relevant university departments. Either meetings of this national committee at regular intervals will be needed or some other way of eliciting their input will be required to review progress, procedures and results throughout the project. Support from such a committee could help to raise the profile of the AHELO Feasibility Study and gain the co-operation of higher education institutions.

16. Several international NPM meetings will be held. There are between two and three meetings per year. Figure 1 presents indicative topics to be considered at these meetings.

**Figure 1: Indicative focus of NPM meetings**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Indicative focus</b>
1	Review instruments and items Review sampling methodology and management Discuss fieldwork procedures Review data management procedures Update on data management and analysis plans Country updates
2	Discuss fieldwork procedures Review data management procedures Update on data management and analysis plans Country updates
3	Overview of coding Discuss coding procedures Coder training Country updates
4	Review fieldwork implementation and outcomes National reports on sampling implementation Review data and initial results Report on and develop analysis plans Consider scientific and practical feasibility Country updates
5	Review study outcomes Review draft results and findings Debrief on feasibility study Country updates

### **Time commitment**

17. The NPM is the primary contact point for the AHELO Consortium dealing with day-to-day activities. Therefore, the position of NPM will ideally involve a full-time contract under stable conditions, to ensure continuity of activities over time:

- The NPM must be able to commit a significant amount of his/her time to the AHELO feasibility study.
- If the NPM does not work full time on the AHELO Feasibility Study, s/he must employ full-time senior staff in key positions such as operations and data management.

18. The amount of time spent on the project by the NPM will depend on the availability of other staff at the National Centre. In particular, the availability of support staff such as administrative assistants and



data management staff will affect the amount of time to spend by the NPM. The most cost-effective arrangement would be for the NPM to spend approximately half their time on the project and for more routine operational tasks to be undertaken by administrative staff or more junior staff under the supervision of the NPM. It is estimated that in total the work involved would require the equivalent of one and a half or two full-time staff although additional administrative staff may be needed at busy periods, for example when collating and dispatching materials to participating institutions or in connection with recruiting manuals.

### **NPM responsibilities**

19. The NPM will undertake or supervise all tasks related to the development and implementation of the AHELO feasibility study in his/her country:

- The NPM will be required to attend NPM meetings convened for two main purposes:
  - To provide a forum for national representatives to review, comment on and ratify proposals presented by the AHELO Consortium relating to assessment frameworks and instruments, contextual surveys, sampling requirements, survey operations, data confidentiality and status reports; and
  - To provide training for NPMs on sampling tasks, operational procedures, scoring and coding, data preparation and data cleaning.
- The NPM is responsible for the following communication and reporting activities:
  - Communicate the country's official position on a range of aspects of the project, both to the AHELO Consortium and at NPM meetings.
  - Interact with the AHELO Consortium and other international committees as needed.
  - Prepare reports on the preparation and implementation of the feasibility study, including reports of sampling plans, adaptation and translation of survey instruments and the overall conduct and progress of data collection.
  - Monitor and utilise the AHELO Exchange for communications on all project-related activities.
  - Prepare and tailor the AHELO Feasibility Study outreach materials for promoting the project and liaise with local media, if appropriate.
  - Review technical reports and draft of final report.
- The NPM is responsible for the following test development activities:
  - Review questionnaires and cognitive instruments for accuracy of information, national relevance and cultural appropriateness.
  - Recruit assessment/subject specialist(s) to review assessment instruments and surveys.
- The NPM is responsible for the following translation and adaptation activities:

- Monitor and coordinate the translation and adaptation of instruments and supporting materials (training and administration manuals) according to translation and adaptation specifications provided by AHELO Consortium.
- Document proposed changes to instruments and supporting materials for the verification phase of the documents.
- Communicate with the AHELO Consortium on translation and adaptation issues.
- The NPM is responsible for the following sampling activities:
  - Monitor the sample design and selection process according to detailed specifications provided by AHELO Consortium.
  - Recruit higher education institutions based on a convenience sample based on provided guidelines.
  - Review student sampling process and selection of faculty.
- The NPM is responsible for the following survey operations activities:
  - Monitor the production, dispatch and receipt of materials to and from institutions.
  - Ensure that procedures for administering the assessment instruments and surveys are thoroughly understood by the ICs.
  - Conduct training sessions for ICs (sampling and administration procedures).
  - Recruit scorers to attend scoring session, based on guidelines provided by AHELO Consortium.
- The NPM is responsible for the following data file preparation activities:
  - Communicate data entry procedures and supervise data entry operations.
  - Conduct validation checks of data from the survey instruments, following the detailed guidelines.
  - Organise the dispatch of data files to the AHELO Consortium.
  - Respond to data queries in a timely fashion.
  - The NPM is responsible for ensuring quality control throughout survey implementation through prescribed monitoring, verification and reporting activities.
- For countries participating in a strand involving computer-assisted delivery of instruments, NPMs must perform significant activities related to systems integration and operation. Each NPM may choose to appoint an information technology coordinator who will have direct responsibility for the following activities:

- Obtain or ensure access to sufficient computers to support survey operations. These computers must meet the minimum technical requirements established by the AHELO Consortium and should be dedicated to the AHELO Feasibility Study project during the study.
- Configure these computers with assessment instruments/survey software to AHELO Consortium specifications.
- Train ICs in the operation of the computers and the assessment instruments/survey software.
- Along with the NPM and related staff, receive training on the assessment instruments/survey software.
- Operate a national helpdesk to provide technical support for the Institutional Coordinators.
- Extract survey data from laptop computers and manage the formatting and cleaning of the data for delivery to the AHELO Consortium.